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History's Broken Mirror

I am a merchant
Who does not buy face or story
Who does not sell smiles, cheap thrills or false victories
My aim is to trade sorrow's weight for our spirit's wings
And when petrol bombs, words and guns fail
You will not find me on my knees

Your acid tears
Ebony child
Are the spring bubbling at the roots of my vocation
The deep furrows they have left on your sunken face
A face ever twisted and twisting in a wretched 1994 smile
Are an ancestral atlas
Mapping the path of the colonial rape
All the millions of its miles.

This rape
Its violence
Still reverberates
Invisibly
But to you

A rape
Violence
Noise
Echoes
Invisible
But to you

I may be a merchant
But I do not buy face or story
Nor do I sell smiles, cheap thrills or false victories
My only aim is to trade sorrow's weight for my spirit's wings
And when petrol bombs, words and guns fail
You will not find me on my knees

I gaze
Into history's broken mirror
Where your dim countenance reaches for me
Once dignified
You now fracture
Break
Fight
Half-mutating-half-frozen-in-time
Not quite human, not quite animal
A thing
A slave
Sinking into glorified futures

Fast forward to the present
Your eyes reach from behind the cheap smile of borrowed freedoms that you wear
You
The slave they still see when the shadow of your broken spirit walks past
A bag of fermented misery

Smiling
Suffering
And fading into a white oblivion
Also known as bright future
Or progress
You run
For an eternity
One leg Jack in a four legged race
Playing catch up
But never quite matching up

This hollow bag of rattling coughing bones that you are
Haunts me
This unseen shell
Dancing its bones off
Offstage
This ghostly scream in the night
Wailing for a light
Any light
To turn shadow into form

I am a merchant
And this is why
I do not buy face or story
Nor do I sell fake smiles, cheap thrills or false victories
My one and only aim is to trade sorrow's weight for my spirit's wings
And when petrol bombs, words and guns fail
You will not find me on my knees
Oh no!

I did not choose this trade you see
I just simply cannot refuse it

Some have declared it an ancestral gift
Some say it is a dis-order
A rift
Making me a seeker who is un-fit
Un-lit
Un-seen
While some say these are the works of those night-shifters who fly through the skies on long
brooms, content to turn the old horror inwards
Towards self

I do not know which is true

But in the streets
My lightbulb eyes bleed floods of your raging fears
Ebony child
The cyclonic waves of your howling lifts me
Spins me
Splits me outward
Inward
Upward
Scattered
I am
Towards hurricanes and hurricanes of children's whispers

Then stares
Their eyes
Bulging
Glaring
Stabbing
Saying:
“The unseen, the unheard, can turn formlessness into a flaming torch of victory”

How
I ask

“Your words. Spoken in a time before time. Remember?”

The words
Like a sudden waterfall in the desert
Pierce through my being
Splinters of light suddenly flash
Lightning style
They illuminate the dark corners of my hollow being

And in this whirlwind
For a nanosecond
I remember
I am free.

(Pause.)
A voice
A question
Creeps in through the crack left by doubt

“Doesn’t embracing formlessness make one disappear completely?”

The children disappear
I fall
Hard
Into nothingness
An abyss

My eyes open

A volcanic eruption
Hot lava of sorrow pursues me
Reminds me

I am a merchant
I do not buy face or story
And I don’t sell fake smiles, cheap thrills and false victories